

FASHION ATTRACTIONS





Vintage Carnival

By Tina Causey-Escobedo
Photography by Steve Keith

Designer Renny Lacle used Aruban folklore as his inspiration for this costume (modeled by Jerianne Tiel) that was shown in Carnival 2001.

Originally designed for then Miss Universe Aruba Denise Balinge, Renny incorporated ancient Indian symbols embroidered on the dress and headpiece.

The symbols, called hex signs, could be found framing the homes of many Aruban doorways and were believed to ward off evil spirits.

Aruba's Carnival parades are a fashion runway of costume couture. The island's handful of costume designers dive deep within their creative selves to produce the season's brightest stars on the streets, and devout Carnival goers can easily spout off the most memorable costumes of past years.

Fashion designer Ronchi de Cuba, creator of his own clothing line, moonlights as a costume designer and has been



Left: Our cover model, Mary Ann Maduro, shows off Edgar Kock's design inspired by the warmth of Aruba's sun. It is shown here with swimwear from Solo by Ronchi, but the original costume was a one-piece worn by Deyanira Frank, Miss Universe Aruba 2002. *Above:* Designer Andrew Curriel premiered his "X-Man" costume, modeled here by Cedric Frans, as part of a futuristic space theme in 2002.



Kendrah Matthews models Ronchi de Cuba's 2001 creation, "Energy," inspired by the ambiance, rhythm, and movement of Carnaval.

sending his creations out on the parade routes since 1989. "Carnaval parades are comprised of groups, with each one having its own theme," says Ronchi. "...This year I was contracted by the Champagne group to create a series of costumes for their 'diamond celebration' theme."

Ronchi divides the design process into several stages. "Usually a theme is decided about a year in advance. I play around with sketches by starting with the floor members—the most basic and most numerous costumes in a group. Then I expand the idea with the body pieces; these are the costumes that are enhanced with extensions like shoulder pieces, waist pieces, and more extravagant accessories and headpieces. Next, I work on the road pieces, which are pulled on wheels by costumed group members. The last thing I design is the float, which usually functions as the finale of a group. The float is sort of a melting pot of ideas derived from the group's theme," Ronchi explains.

The last step for most designers is placing the order for all the materials, about ninety percent of which, says Ronchi, come out of New York. The process is then turned over to costume makers and seamstresses, with the designer overseeing last-minute touchups

and final approvals. However, some designers never let go of the reins. "Andrew Curriel is without a doubt the island's top costume designer," says Ronchi, "and he is meticulous about every detail, staying involved in every phase of the production."

Sometimes the designers hit their mark perfectly, while other times their work is received with unpredictable response from the parade crowds. Ronchi's favorite theme was a part of 2000's Carnaval. "I was working for the Olympus Carnaval group and the theme was Greek mythology. That is the only year I followed the entire process from start to finish, even building the road pieces and floats out back in my workshop. It was exhausting but memorable." Likewise, there are years that midway through the process, a designer feels unsure about a design but can't turn back. "In 1995, I was working on a 'Cirque du Soleil' theme. I simply hated the

It's all in the Details

"I think of the costume's creative process as a journey," says designer Ronchi de Cuba. "It starts with the feet, travels up to the ankle pieces, follows to the midsection, the wrist accessories, and climaxes with the drama of the headpiece."



Left: These boots are made for walking—but try walking a four-mile parade route in these! Ronchi's rule of thumb with the feet: "If the costume carries down past the knees with details, the footwear should be subtle. If the legs are bare, then go 'Bang!' with the shoes."





On a tropical island,
there's something comforting
about an authentic American
steak house and seafood grill.



Looking for a refuge from unknown flavors and tropical spices? Look no further. The Sunset Grille combines prime cuts of aged American beef with the most exquisite setting to create truly memorable dining events. And, our extensive menu includes sushi, lobster, and other seafoods fresh from the ocean to your table. Oceanside views in a modern art deco atmosphere. Only at the Sunset Grille. 866555





NANNINI
Italy

Firenze, Milano, Paris, Osaka, Hong Kong,
Seoul, Ryadh, Aruba
Strada Mall III, Emmastraat #1, Oranjestad, Aruba
Tel.: 297-588368
www.nannini.it ■ nanniniaruba@hotmail.com



Above: Another Curriel creation, this "Green Forest Amazonia" was part of an Amazon Jungle theme from Carnaval in 1999.
Below: Andrew Curriel's "Zebra Warrior" debuted in Carnaval 2002. It is modeled here by Emmanuel Fernandez.



costume I designed for the Carnaval queen representing Oranjestad. But wouldn't you know, it won 'Best Costume' and the group won 'Best Show' that year!"

Each Carnaval is exciting and unique in its own way, yet one thing is certain—the island's designers will continue to outdo last year's themes and leave their own creative mark on each season. 